



## ***AOT in Action***

Welcome to AOT in Action, your weekly e-newsletter from the Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT).

### **A Message from Director Sherry Henry:**

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Good afternoon,

We have some great news to announce this today!

Our national campaign, “Free to Be” is underway in targeted cities across the nation. In tandem with this marketing initiative, we will also be launching a new version of our consumer Web site, [Arizonaguide.com](http://Arizonaguide.com) later this week.

Reflecting the visual elements and messaging of the national campaign, the Web site offers the same great information that Arizona travelers have come to rely upon, but with a few enhancements such as improved navigation and completely revamped content. Along with the new look and feel, the Web site also has a much stronger call to action to incite action among potential visitors, inviting them to feel *free to be* in Arizona.

Keep an eye out for the new [Web site](#)!

Have a great week.

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### **AOT News**

#### **Send Us Your Fall Travel Deals & Packages!**

Now that we’re heading into the fall season, we’re looking for wonderful fall package deals from around the state to showcase on [Travel Deals](#).

Post your fall packages today and take advantage of this great opportunity to highlight where visitors can stay and what they can do in your region. Don’t forget to partner with other area

hotels or attractions to create even more memorable packages for visitors and keep them coming back for more!

If you are experiencing issues with uploading your travel deals or have any questions about the process, please contact Elysia Labita at 602-364-3705 or via e-mail at [elabita@azot.gov](mailto:elabita@azot.gov).

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## **AOT Activities**

### **Partner with AOT on International Marketing Co-ops for FY10**

During FY10 the Trade and Media Relations Division will conduct several co-operative marketing projects geared to increase consumer awareness about Arizona in key international markets and drive business to partnering tour operators. A brief summary of each campaign is included. Participation is open to Arizona CVBs, Chambers and DMOs. To view all of the co-operative marketing projects, [click here](#).

## **Upcoming Events & Activities**

### **Arizona Media Marketplace**

**Date:** October 15

**Location:** Scottsdale Fairmont Hotel

### **Travel Classics West**

**Date:** October 15 – 18

**Location:** Scottsdale Fairmont Hotel

### **Canada Sales Mission**

**Date:** October 19 – 23

**Location:** Toronto, Winnipeg and Edmonton

### **Japan Sales Mission**

**Date:** October 26 – 30

**Location:** Tokyo and Osaka, Japan

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## **Industry News**

### **Nina Mason Pulliam Rio Salado Audubon Center Set to Open on October 10th with Nature Events for Families**

On Saturday, October 10, the long-awaited Nina Mason Pulliam Rio Salado Audubon Center will open its doors to the public. To mark the special occasion, Audubon Arizona is hosting a grand opening celebration that is open to the public.

Located at 3131 South Central Avenue, the state-of-the-art, environmentally-friendly center is adjacent to Phoenix's 600-acre Rio Salado Habitat Restoration Area, an environmental restoration that stretches along five miles of the historic Salt River. The Audubon Center's grand opening

event will give visitors of all ages an opportunity to experience this inspiring habitat and interact with Sonoran Desert wildlife right in the heart of downtown Phoenix.

“The opening of the Audubon Center will allow us to introduce thousands of people a year, many of them children, to the animals and plants found in our beautiful Sonoran Desert,” said Sam Campana, Audubon Arizona Executive Director. “We hope to instill a culture of conservation in the next generation and to help city-dwellers experience the wonders of nature in their own backyard.”

Since the Salt River restoration project began in June 2000, the number of bird species has grown from a few dozen to over 200, and other animals have returned as well. Flycatchers, owls, roadrunners, hawks, herons and hummingbirds are now common sights in the area which was, for decades, a landfill.

The free family festivities for the Audubon Center Grand Opening begin at 10:00am. Visitors will be treated to refreshments and be able to participate in nature activities from 11:00am to 2:00pm. The morning will also include special VIP speakers and entertainment.

“We are proud to play a role in introducing the new Audubon Center to the community. As the Valley’s urban areas expand, this remarkable place and the programs Audubon offers here will help residents of all ages enjoy, appreciate, and learn to protect nature,” said John Felix, Big Chief of the Thunderbirds and President of Thunderbirds Charities, the signature sponsor of the Audubon Center’s grand opening. Additional support for this community celebration was provided by Walmart, the Arizona Lottery, and SCF Arizona.

Generous funding for the construction and early operations of the Audubon Center came from Ak-Chin Indian Community, Arizona Sports and Tourism Authority, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Arizona, JPMorgan Chase Foundation, Dorrance Family Foundation, Freeport-McMoRan Copper and Gold Inc., Gila River Indian Community, The Arthur L. and Elaine V. Johnson Foundation, The Kresge Foundation, Kemper and Ethel Marley Foundation, Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust, the City and citizens of Phoenix, Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust, and SRP as well as other Valley institutions and individuals.

Audubon Arizona is a not-for-profit organization and is the State Office of the National Audubon Society.

### **Business Travel Spending Still on Decline, but Slowing**

Spending declines and discounting will likely continue but the travel industry may finally be poised for a rebound. According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis Travel and Tourism Satellite Accounts released last week, and real spending on overall travel and tourism dropped only 1.4% in the second quarter of 2009. This is a substantial deceleration from the 8.9% decline previously experienced between January and April 2009. Real spending on accommodations, down 1.7%, and transportation, down 7.8d%, accounted for most of the second quarter decline. However that dip was significantly reduced in both categories when compared to Q1 2009 results, which were down 21.8% and 22.1% respectively. Travel and tourism prices also continued to dip at a reduced rate of 3.5%, following a previous quarter decline of 10.6%. Pricing drops in accommodations slowed to a 6.8% decline after a loss of 15.1% in the first quarter.

([www.MiMegasite.com](http://www.MiMegasite.com); *Travel Advance*, Sept. 28)

### **Airlines More Inventive with Fees**

British Airways said Friday that as of Oct. 7 it would start charging business and economy-class passengers to reserve seats more than 24 hours in advance of their flights. Meanwhile, American, United, Delta and US Airways last week added \$10 surcharges for travel on three busy days around the Thanksgiving and New Year's holidays. American added the charge Wednesday, United matched on Thursday and Delta and US Airways added the fee Friday. A proliferation of passenger charges has added to the cost of travel during the past year even as average ticket prices have fallen. Analysts don't expect other carriers to quickly match British Airways' new charges for advance seat reservations. ([www.ChicagoTribune.com/Business](http://www.ChicagoTribune.com/Business), Sat.; [www.ajc.com/Business/Sun](http://www.ajc.com/Business/Sun); *Travel Advance*, Sept. 28)

### **International Visitor Spending Down Sharply in July**

The Department of Commerce said Monday that international visitors to the U.S. spent an estimated \$9.6 billion on travel to, and tourism-related activities within, the U.S. during the month of July-nearly 24% less than visitors spent during July 2008. Purchases of travel and tourism-related goods and services by international visitors traveling in the U.S. totaled \$7.5 billion for the month, a decrease of more than 23% when compared to last year. These goods and services include food, lodging, recreation, gifts, entertainment, local transportation in the U.S. and other items incidental to foreign travel. July marked the ninth-straight month in which U.S. travel and tourism-related exports were lower when compared to the same period of the previous year. Year-to-date through July, travel and tourism-related exports totaled \$69.2 billion, down nearly 17% from the same period of 2008. Spending by Americans abroad totaled \$57.5 billion, down nearly 13% when compared to last year. (*Special to TA; Travel Advance*, Sept. 29)

### **On the Road Again: RV Sales See an Upswing**

A closely watched report today on consumer confidence is expected to show modest improvement, but some economists are heartened by a more obscure measure of buyer sentiment: recreational vehicle sales. RV wholesaler shipments jumped 16% in August from July to a seasonally adjusted annualized rate of 209,800, the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association reports today. While that's about half the industry's torrid sales pace in 2006, it's a 136% surge from January. RVIA predicts 146,200 shipments in 2009 and a 27% increase in 2010. Sales of motor homes and travel trailers are seen by some economists as a leading indicator of the economy's health, because they're among the largest discretionary purchases a consumer can make. (*Page 1B, USA Today; Travel Advance*, Sept. 29)

### **Safety Number 1 Concern for International Tourists**

What is the main concern among travelers when selecting a holiday destination? Cost? Accommodations? Tourist attractions in the area? According to a report by the FIA in World Tourism Day, potential travelers care less about these things and more about their safety when choosing their holiday destination. In the study, individuals consistently selected safety concerns related to crime, natural disasters, health or terrorism, as one of the main things they considered when crossing off a location from their list. Following closely behind safety as a reason to rule out a destination was weather, poor accommodations and lack of natural beauty in the area. The survey was conducted internationally through FIA National Automobile and Touring Clubs and collected data from more than 9,000 people in 38 countries. ([www.TravelAgentCentral.com](http://www.TravelAgentCentral.com); *Travel Advance*, Sept. 29)

### **Consumer Confidence Drops in September**

A surprise drop in consumer confidence tripped up investors Tuesday, a day after a round of corporate takeovers set off a steep market rally. Stocks slid after the Conference Board said its consumer confidence index fell unexpectedly in September, depressed by persistent worries about

the job market. The report offset early enthusiasm over an increase in home prices. (*www.latimes.com/Business*, Page 4B, *USA Today*; *Travel Advance*, Sept. 30)

### **Grand Canyon Mulls Limits on Mules**

The National Park Service is considering a limit on mule rides into the Grand Canyon. The mules, though iconic and beloved, are brutal on the trails. Their hooves hit the ground like a pickax, and the hardened earth crumbles. Paths erode more quickly. Mule rides have already been banned on the South Kailbab Trail, where the Park Service is months into a years-long project to rebuild the 7-mile trail. Nobody is suggesting a ban on mule rides into the canyon, where there are no roads and few helicopter flights. In some cases, the animals are the only way to transport supplies. Rather, the Park Service is trying to measure the effect of tourists mule trips on the environment. Last year, 9,600 people rode mules into the canyon. (Page 3A, *USA Today*; *Travel Advance*, Sept. 30).

### **Keeping US Airways Aloft**

With the specter of swine flu and continued economic troubles looming over air travel, some analysts now question whether US Airways can survive the traditionally lean winter months, says *Business Week*. "They've leveraged everything they own and don't have many other ways to raise cash," says Robert Herbst, an industry consultant and editor of *AirlineFinancial.com*. But US Airways CEO Doug Parker brushes aside the doomsayers. "I don't see any more casualties this business cycle," he says. With business bookings up, "it feels as though we're climbing out of this." (Page 34, *BusinessWeek*, 10/5) Also in this issue: Hotelier Sunstone Investments is overleveraged and under occupied (P. 39); *Travel Advance*, Sept. 30.)

### **AMEX Expects Rise in Meetings Held in 2010**

Following weakened demand this year, American Express Business Travel expects pent up need for travel and meetings to be unleashed in 2010. This increased demand will likely cause rates to slightly increase in most travel categories by the end of 2010, according to the American Express Global Business Travel Forecast, released Wednesday. The forecast also reports companies will have more formal oversight of their meeting planning and meetings spending in 2010. In addition, companies are expected to loosen purse strings on events and conferences, with potential in-roads by travel category managers adopting strategic meeting management programs.

Overall business travel growth is predicted to be up 1% for the U.S. and 14% for Canada in 2010. Hotel rates are expected to remain on the decline in North America as a whole as hoteliers fight to attract both business and consumer travelers back. Car rental rates will likely increase slightly as the cost of vehicles is expected to rise following decreases in capacity in 2009. ([www.BTN.com](http://www.BTN.com), 9/30; [www.MiMegasie.com](http://www.MiMegasie.com), 9/30; [www.OrlandoSentinel.com](http://www.OrlandoSentinel.com), *Business*; *Travel Advance*, Oct. 1)

### **Canadian Travel Market: "Worst in History"**

Canada's tourism trade is going through the worst period in its history, says the head of a major industry association. "This is worse than any other recessionary period that we've seen," Travel Industry Association of Canada CEO Randy Williams told CBC News. He added:

"This has been the most challenging that many [in] our industry have seen in their lifetime." Statistics Canada recently reported tourism spending in Canada fell for the fourth straight quarter in the three months ending in June. It fell by \$128 million, or 0.8 percent, to \$16.4 billion.

“Tourism was hit in that quarter by tougher passport requirements for people crossing the American border that took effect on June 1 and the cancellation of Canadian flights to Mexico after the outbreak of the H1N1 influenza virus,” says CBS News.

Williams said there are additional factors that have worked against the industry throughout the year, including:

- The lingering recession.
- Rising global competition as an increasing number of countries promote themselves as destinations.
- Canada's comparatively high airline costs.
- The lack of approved destination status with China -- something 127 other countries do have.

Since 2003, Williams said, the downturn has become worse than 9/11 or the SARS outbreak six years ago. "Our industry is suffering a lot more than during that year," he said. Williams expected an upside for travelers, though. "You'll see a lot of consolidation of businesses, a lot of cuts in pricing in order to get the volumes there," he said. "There'll be a lot of bargains available to travelers." (*David Wilkening – TravelMole e-newsletter, Oct. 1*)

### **Industry Execs Meet with DHS Secretary**

Travel industry leaders from across the country met Thursday with Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano to discuss a host of issues affecting travel and tourism, including swine flu preparation and efforts to welcome more international visitors to the U.S. The meeting was facilitated by the Congressional Travel and Tourism Caucus, which is chaired by Reps. Sam Farr, D-Calif., and Roy Blunt, R-Mo. The meeting, which is part of the Caucus' ongoing breakfast series, was the first such meeting between industry leaders and Napolitano. "Travel plays a critical role in driving America's economic recovery," said Jonathan Tisch, chairman and CEO of Loews Hotels and chairman emeritus of the U.S. Travel Association. (*Special to TA; Travel Advance, Oct. 2*)

### **North Rim of Grand Canyon to Remain Open after October 15 with Limited Services**

Grand Canyon National Park staff will soon begin the regular seasonal closure of many visitor services and facilities on the North Rim. However, the rim will remain open with limited services through November 29 or until snow closes Highway 67 leading into the park. Park visitors will no longer be able to access the North Rim by vehicle beginning on November 30.

Reservations for the Grand Canyon Lodge North Rim will be accepted through the night of October 15. All other concessioner-related visitor services, with the exception of the gas station, will close at the end of the day on October 15. The last meal served at Grand Canyon Lodge will be breakfast, which ends at 10:00 a.m. on October 16. The final day for mule rides on the North Rim will be October 15.

The National Park Service North Rim Visitor Center and Bookstore, as well as the Backcountry Permits Office, will remain open through November 29. From October 16 until the North Rim closes for the season, these facilities will be open from 9:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. daily. The final day for regularly scheduled ranger-led programs, as advertised in The Guide, will be October 15.

Starting October 16, campsites with limited services, such as portable toilets, will be available for a \$12 fee on a first-come, first-served basis. Water will only be available outside the NPS administration office. Gas and diesel fuel will continue to be available at the gas station in the

park on a pay-at-the-pump basis. Entrance fees and campground fees will be collected through the end of the day on November 29 or until snow closes Highway 67.

As in previous years, hikers and cross-country skiers will be permitted to use the park's group campsites throughout the winter months if they have obtained a permit through the Park's South Rim Backcountry Information Center or by going to the Visitor Center at Pipe Spring National Monument. The South Rim Backcountry Information Center is open year-round and can be reached by calling (928) 638-7875, Monday through Friday, from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. MST. Permit requests can be faxed year-round to (928) 638-2125. Permits are not considered earlier than the first of the month, four months prior to the proposed start date.

The Kaibab Lodge, located four miles north of the park boundary, will offer full services through October 31. The Kaibab Lodge will close for the season after breakfast November 1. The North Rim Country Store, also located outside of the park boundary across from the Kaibab Lodge, will remain open until November 8, weather permitting. Jacob Lake Inn, restaurant and gas station, located 45 miles from the North Rim developed area, remains open year-round. The Kaibab Plateau Visitor Center at Jacob Lake will have reduced hours starting in mid-October.

Arizona Department of Transportation officials will try and keep Highway 67 open through the end of November, but heavy snowfall could close the road earlier. After October 15, visitors are encouraged to call Arizona Highway information at (888) 411-7623 in advance of their trip to check on the status of Highway 67.

The South Rim and Inner Canyon facilities remain open year-round.

For additional information on North Rim operations, please contact the North Rim Visitor Center at (928) 638-7864. A Grand Canyon trip planner may be downloaded from the park's web site at [www.nps.gov/grca](http://www.nps.gov/grca). Additional information may also be obtained by calling the park's main information line at (928) 638-7888.

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## **Calendar of Events**

Visit [www.ArizonaGuide.com](http://www.ArizonaGuide.com) to find information on all the exciting [events, festivals and activities](#) held throughout the Grand Canyon State!

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